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International Bridge announces upcoming projects

Fast facts:

- The Sault Ste. Marie Bridge Authority (SSMBA) board of directors received updates on planned bridge maintenance projects at its meeting Thursday.
- The bridge's Canadian arch will be painted using an alternate one-coat technique.
- Capital projects at the Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge have been rescheduled and others will be performed in-house to take advantage of new or alternate cost-effective technology.

February 10, 2017 -- The Sault Ste. Marie Bridge Authority (SSMBA) board of directors, the bi-national body that supervises operations of the International Bridge, heard reports on upcoming bridge projects at the board's regular meeting Thursday.

The SSMBA board reviewed plans by the International Bridge Administration (IBA) to replace bridge components and complete painting projects in 2017.

"We've re-evaluated the bridge's overall business plan with regard to timing of future capital projects and we've started a more aggressive preventive maintenance program," said IBA General Manager Peter Petainen. "We plan to be more cost-effective by completing certain projects in-house and integrating new or alternate technologies."

Two contracted projects are scheduled for 2017. A project to replace two rocker link arms on the U.S. arch had been slated for fall 2016. The link arms move to allow for expansion and contraction of the arch as temperature conditions change. After extended financial negotiations, the IBA reached an agreement with the selected contractor to remove the 10-foot-tall rocker link arms and replace them with new disc bearings. IBA will coordinate the installation schedule of the new disc bearings with the contractor for the project, budgeted at \$500,000.

The Canadian arch painting project, also originally slated for 2016, was rescheduled to 2017 due to higher-than-expected bids. IBA staff used the year to evaluate alternative cost-effective paint systems. Documents, specifications, and the coatings report have all been edited, and the project is currently being advertised for bids specifying a high ratio calcium sulfonate alkyd (HRCSA) one-coat paint system.

"This innovative product and process continues to draw the attention of both the bridge owners, Federal Bridge, and the Michigan Department of Transportation," said Bridge Engineer Karl Hansen. "Benefits include anticipated cost savings, enhanced corrosion resistance, quicker completion time, and minimized disturbance to the environment and our customers."

In addition to again pursuing the yearly goal of 95 percent completion of all routine maintenance items, IBA staff will also begin cleaning and coating the vehicle curb rail along the full length of the bridge. Staff will also spot paint areas on the U.S. arch in order to defer complete painting of the arch, originally scheduled to be contracted work in 2019, to a later date in accordance with the approved capital plan. Painting all the steel beams under U.S. bridge spans 1 and 2 will round out the year's in-house painting goals.

IBA maintenance staff are scheduled to perform other projects in-house this year, including the replacement of sliding plate bearings on both the U.S. and Canadian arch trusses this construction season. Replacement of the bridge's 15 sliding plate bearings will begin on the Canadian arch prior to commencement of the arch painting project. The bearing project work will begin as weather allows. The goal is to have all 15 bearings installed by October.

With the addition of extra seasonal staff to assist with traffic control, IBA officials predict the busy maintenance schedule will be completed with minimal impact on bridge traffic.

The operation and maintenance of the International Bridge is totally self-funded, primarily through bridge tolls. It is not subsidized by any state, provincial, or federal government entity. For a complete list of International Bridge tolls, visit the IBA website at www.michigan.gov/IBA.

For more information on the International Bridge, please visit www.saultbridge.com or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/saultbridge](https://twitter.com/saultbridge).

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Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge:
Bridging Our Past, Connecting Our Future